

Regional Competitiveness Act

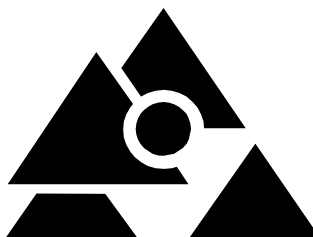
Helping communities strengthen their economic competitiveness through regional cooperation

Program Summary

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Community Development
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Regional Competitiveness Program Summary

Background

The General Assembly established the Regional Competitiveness Program in 1996 through the passage of the Virginia Regional Competitiveness Act (§15.2-1306 through §15.2-1310 of the Code of Virginia). The purpose of the Act is to enhance economic competitiveness for all regions of the Commonwealth. To do this, the Act established an incentive fund to encourage joint activities designed to address regional economic competitiveness needs.

The Regional Competitiveness Program is designed to reward existing regional actions and stimulate new regional activities. Even areas of the state where regional activity has already been initiated are required to increase their efforts and reach new levels of cooperation in order to qualify for incentives. Incentive funds are available to localities that choose to come together to carry out new levels of regional economic development.

The Office of Community Revitalization and Development within the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has been charged with oversight of this program.

Qualification Requirements

The Act sets out several requirements for participation in the Regional Competitiveness Program. Once these requirements have been met, partnerships are in a position to request funding eligibility.

Regional Delineation

The Act states that a region “means a planning district.” A region comprises the cities, town of greater than 3,500 population, and counties within a planning district boundary.

Other regional configurations can be established with approval from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. DHCD will not recognize any regional configuration that contains a combination of fewer than three contiguous cities, counties, or towns. In addition, all three of these localities cannot be part of a single jurisdiction. For example, a region comprising a county and two towns within that county would not qualify.

Partnership Formation

Regions wishing to participate in the Regional Competitiveness Program are directed by the Act to establish a regional partnership that includes broad representation from the business community, civic groups, education and local government. Specifically, participation is required of the chief elected officials, chief administrative officers, corporate leaders, presidents of higher education institutions, representatives of primary and secondary education, and representatives of local civic organizations. A partnership may be an existing or newly formed regional organization and must be approved by all participating local governing bodies.

Strategic Plan Development

The partnership is charged with developing a regional strategic economic development plan that must be adopted by all localities in the partnership. In this plan, they are to provide an analysis of key economic and demographic trends for themselves and competitor regions. They are also to identify existing and proposed joint activities that address the critical issues of economic competitiveness that have been identified. These activities must score a total of at least twenty points, based on values established in the Act, in order to receive incentive funds.

Qualification and Funding History

Once a region is qualified, it receives funds for five years, contingent on adequate performance in implementing its regional strategic plan. Performance is measured by the progress made on achieving benchmarks for each regional activity set out in its strategic plan. Program funds are allocated based on the percentage of population residing in each region.

A total of nineteen partnerships presently exist in the Commonwealth. In July 1997, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development accepted requests for qualifications for the Regional Competitiveness Program from seventeen of these partnerships. Out of the seventeen, seven were qualified. These qualified partnerships included the Crater Regional Partnership, Hampton Roads Partnership, Northern Virginia Regional Partnership, Region 2000 Partnership, Shenandoah Valley Partnership, Southside Regional Partnership, and Virginia's River Country. Funding for this round was \$5,850,000.

In December 1997, the West Piedmont Regional Alliance and Richmond Regional Partnership qualified for the Regional Competitiveness Program, with funding allocated in the July 1998 fund distribution round.

In July 1998, the remaining ten partnerships applied for the program with seven qualifying and receiving funding. These seven included the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership, Fifth Planning District Regional Alliance, Fredericksburg Regional Council, Mount Rogers Regional Competitiveness Partnership, New River Valley Regional Partnership, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Partnership, and Virginia Coalfield Coalition. These partnerships, along with the West Piedmont Regional Alliance, Richmond Regional Partnership, and those partnerships qualified in 1997, shared program funds of \$10,035,239 for fiscal year 1998-99.

In July 1999, the remaining three unqualified partnerships applied for the program, and each of the three received qualification. These three partnerships included the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Partnership, the Thomas Jefferson Venture, and Virginia's Heartland Partnership. These partnerships, along with the sixteen previously qualified partnerships, shared fiscal 1999 – 2000 program funds of \$10,640,000. In July 2000, the nineteen regional partnerships shared fiscal year 2000 – 2001 program funds of \$10,899,605.

Table 1
Amount of Funding for Each Partnership in
Fiscal Years 2000-2001, 1999 – 2000, 1998 – 1999, and 1997 – 1998

Partnerships	2000-2001 Funding	1999-2000 Funding	1998-1999 Funding	1997-1998 Funding
Partnerships that received fourth year of funding in fiscal year 2000 – 2001				
Crater Regional Partnership	\$321,146	\$320,355	\$328,375	\$308,364
Hampton Roads Partnership	\$2,293,673	\$2,300,221	\$2,353,400	\$2,215,473
Northern Virginia Regional Partnership	\$2,618,048	\$2,601,973	\$2,578,534	\$2,397,461
Region 2000 Partnership	\$334,369	\$337,041	\$342,717	\$320,696
Shenandoah Valley Regional Partnership	\$370,953	\$372,712	\$377,992	\$353,341
Southside Regional Partnership	\$250,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$125,412
Virginia's River Country	\$250,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$129,253
Partnerships that received third year of funding in fiscal year 2000 – 2001.				
Eastern Shore Regional Partnership	\$250,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	
Fifth Planning District Regional Alliance	\$422,840	\$429,724	\$426,904	
Fredericksburg Regional Council	\$357,102	\$349,998	\$341,463	
Mount Rogers Regional Competitiveness Partnership	\$279,419	\$281,706	\$289,099	
New River Valley Partnership	\$250,000	\$240,395	\$244,260	
Northern Shenandoah Valley Partnership	\$272,945	\$272,407	\$275,146	
Richmond Regional Partnership	\$1,181,952	\$1,185,143	\$1,192,375	
Virginia Coalfield Coalition	\$318,712	\$321,035	\$334,251	
West Piedmont Regional Alliance	\$337,733	\$341,209	\$350,716	
Partnerships that received second year of funding in fiscal year 2000 – 2001.				
Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Partnership	\$250,000	\$200,000		
Thomas Jefferson Venture	\$290,710	\$289,480		
Virginia's Heartland Partnership	\$250,000	\$200,000		

Program Review

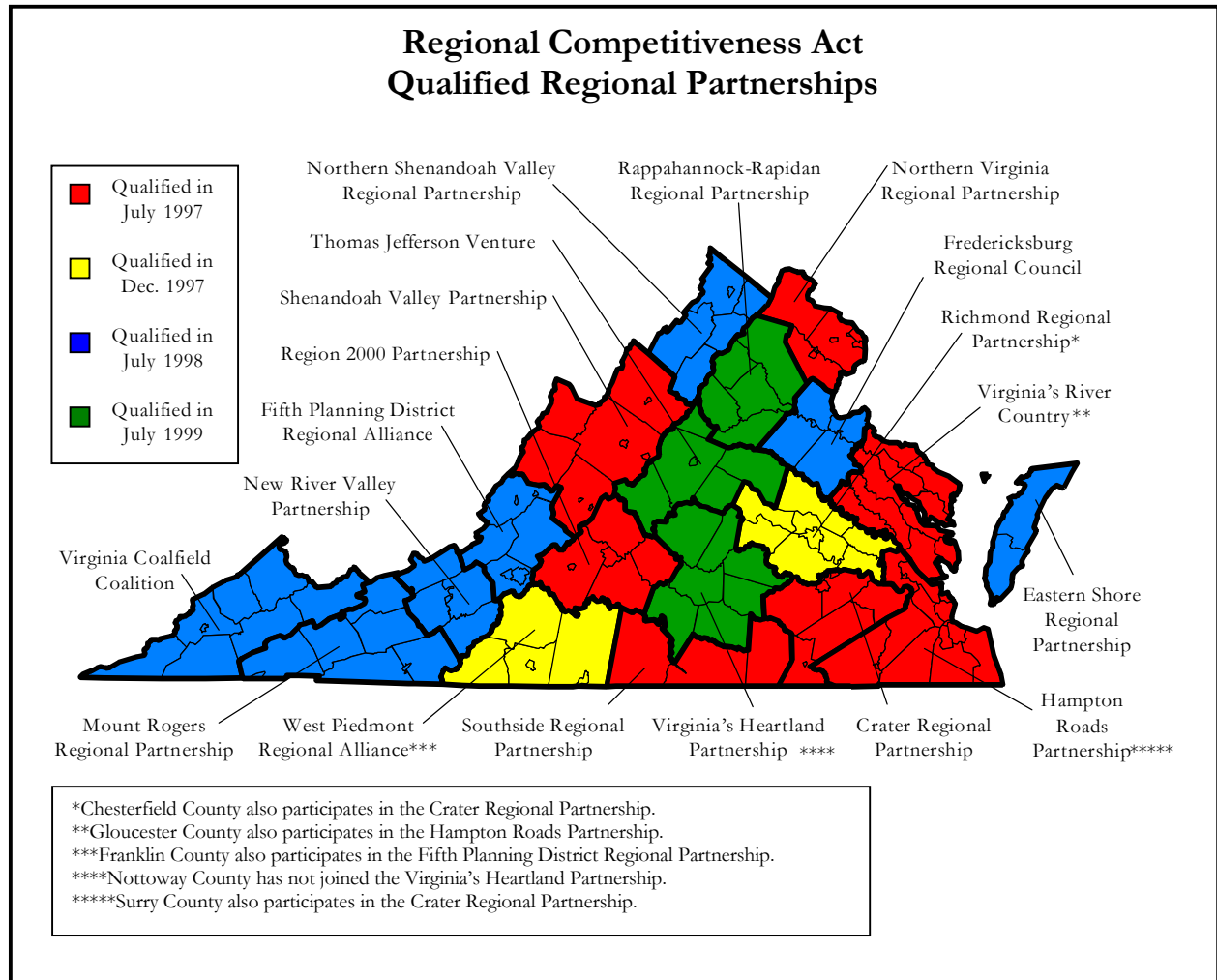
In May 1998, May 1999, and May 2000, DHCD received annual reports from the regional partnerships. In most cases, regions were on track in meeting their established benchmarks for each of their regional projects. Where benchmarks had not been met, appropriate technical assistance remedial actions were taken.

Partnerships are involved with many different activities and programs to enhance the economic competitiveness of their regions. The following is a sampling of these activities:

- Regional workforce assessment and development centers
- Regional revenue sharing agreements
- Regional jobs needs survey, analysis and assessments
- Technology councils
- Work keys initiatives
- Travel councils
- Regional airports
- Healthy families programs
- Regional industrial parks
- Regional marketing programs
- Regional transportation and infrastructure projects

Fiscal year 2000 - 2001 sees all nineteen regional partnerships of the Commonwealth qualified and active with the Regional Competitiveness Program. Each partnership will move forward to enhance its region's economic competitiveness through the implementation of strategies to meet regional economic targets and benchmarks.

Figure 1



Member Localities In Each Partnership	
Partnership	Member Localities
Crater Regional Partnership	Counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Greenville, Prince George, Surry, and Sussex. Cities of Colonial Heights, Emporia, Hopewell, and Petersburg.
Eastern Shore Regional Partnership	Counties of Accomack and Northampton.
Fifth Planning District Regional Alliance	Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, and Roanoke. Cities of Clifton Forge, Covington, Roanoke, and Salem.
Fredericksburg Regional Council	Counties of Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania, and Stafford. City of Fredericksburg.
Hampton Roads Partnership	Counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry, and York. Cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg.
Mount Rogers Regional Competitiveness Partnership	Counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe. Cities of Bristol and Galax.
New River Valley Partnership	Counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski. City of Radford.
Northern Shenandoah Valley Partnership	Counties of Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, and Warren. City of Winchester.
Northern Virginia Regional Partnership	Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William. Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park.
Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Partnership	Counties of Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock.
Region 2000 Partnership	Counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, and Campbell. Cities of Bedford and Lynchburg.
Richmond Regional Partnership	Counties Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan. City of Richmond.
Shenandoah Valley Regional Partnership	Counties of Augusta, Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, and Rockingham. Cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, and Waynesboro.
Southside Regional Partnership	Counties of Brunswick, Halifax, and Mecklenburg.
Thomas Jefferson Venture	Counties of Ablemarle, Greene, Fluvanna, Louisa, and Nelson. City of Charlottesville.
Virginia Coalfield Coalition	Counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, and Wise. City of Norton.
Virginia's Heartland Partnership	Counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, and Prince Edward.
Virginia's River Country	Counties of Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland.
West Piedmont Regional Alliance	Counties of Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania. Cities of Danville and Martinsville.
Notes: Chesterfield County participates in the Crater Regional Partnership and the Richmond Regional Partnership. Gloucester County participates in the Hampton Roads Partnership and Virginia's River Country. Franklin County participates in the Fifth Planning District Regional Partnership and the West Piedmont Regional Alliance. Nottoway County has not joined Virginia's Heartland Partnership.	